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*Minnesota Council for Quality Stakeholder Update*  
*April, 2002*  
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1. A Message from the President: Assessing & Improving Your Organization's Performance

Hello again, and welcome to the April 2002 MN Council for Quality newsletter.

Last week, I attended the 14th annual Quest for Excellence conference in Washington and learned first hand from last year's five Baldrige winners. The winners represented distinct contrasts in organizational profiles: from a \$400 million check manufacturer in Texas (Clarke American) to a 30-person K-12 school district in Alaska that covers 22,000 square miles (Chugach) to the first higher education winner (UW-Stout) to a 17-unit fast food company in Tennessee (Pal's Sudden Service) to a more traditional K-12 institution in New York (Pearl River).

Listening to the stories told by their top and middle managers/educators, one thing struck me as universal: these organizations believed in the power of assessment for learning and enterprise improvement. In fact, many of them swore by it. Consider some of these quotes from the conference:

"...I guarantee the payback [in an assessment] will far outweigh the investment..." -- Charles Korbell, President & CEO, Clarke American

"...We are a small business that requires an ROI. And I can say that Baldrige is an investment, not an expense. The Baldrige process drives knowledge and understanding that can be translated into competitive advantage." -- Tom Crosby, President & CEO, Pal's Sudden Service

"...Go through the assessment and application process each year -- don't wait until you are 'perfect' to apply [to Baldrige or your state's program].

Use the process as a learning opportunity for the entire organization."  
-- Julie Furst-Bowe, Associate Vice Chancellor, UW-Stout

These organizations have used an assessment process the way in which it was intended: to gauge and improve their performance. And all of them said they will continue to do so after winning the Award.

The Minnesota Council for Quality has a variety of assessment tools that are designed to meet a range of needs. We have some tools that are comprehensive and modeled after Baldrige, and others that are abbreviated versions that are appropriate for smaller businesses, non-profits, or organizations earlier on their journey.

We also have gone to a "rolling" assessment schedule in 2002, meaning that we will be ready to field a team of Evaluators when your organization is ready for an assessment. To my knowledge, we are the only program in the country using that approach, but I feel it is much more customer-focused than us forcing a timeline on the marketplace.

I encourage your organization to consider doing an assessment this year -- particularly given the challenges facing most organizations in a difficult marketplace. Whether you use the Minnesota Council for Quality, Baldrige, or do a self-assessment (with or without the assistance of consultants), you will gain benefit from the process itself, and will begin -- or continue -- a powerful journey of improvement.

To learn more about the Minnesota Council for Quality's assessment process, please feel free to contact me through [mc4quality@aol.com](mailto:mc4quality@aol.com). Or, if you know of other organizations that might be interested in assessing and improving their performance, please feel free to send them my direction.

Sincerely,

Brian Lassiter  
President

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2. Deadline for 2002 Board of Evaluators Approaching

The application deadline for the 2002 Board of Evaluators for new Evaluators was last Friday. However, we are extending the deadline until this Friday, April 19. The deadline for returning Evaluators is Friday, May 17 (and only requires updates to your previous application).

As a member of the 2002 Board, you will have the opportunity to evaluate one or more organizations against the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. So why consider applying to the 2002 Board?

\* The experience of participating an assessment can be a very rewarding and educational. You not only will develop a deeper understanding of performance excellence, but will get to see it applied to a different organization in possibly a different sector.

\* The Evaluator training is valuable. Facilitated by Dr. Mark Blazey of the Quantum Performance Group, the training is considered one of the best in the nation and will not only prepare you for an assessment, but also is a valuable overview to performance excellence in general.

\* The networking is valuable -- not only at training, but especially on your team. You will develop relationships and contacts with professionals that can certainly last for years.

\* The assessment timeline is more flexible this year. Unlike the past where the "cycle" began in June and ended sometime in November, this year we have a "rolling" cycle. This means that you will have the opportunity to do an assessment when it best fits your schedule.

\* The cost has gone down. As a token of our appreciation of your expertise and volunteer efforts, we have reduced Evaluator training prices this year. First year Evaluators are full price, second-year are half-price, and any year beyond is free. This structure rewards experience and loyalty, and we hope will encourage some of the more experienced Evaluators to return.

Training for new Evaluators is April 26 and May 29-31. Training for all returning Evaluators is May 29-31. For more information or for an application, please email Kathryn at [mc4quality@aol.com](mailto:mc4quality@aol.com)

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3. Disney: Keys to Excellence -- May 3

The Rochester Area Quality Council (RAQC) is proud to announce that the Disney Institute will be showcasing their best practices and philosophies from the world renowned Walt Disney World ®Resort next month at "Disney: Keys to Excellence." The event will focus on leadership, management, and service at Disney. The event is Friday, May 3 from 7:30 a.m to 3:30 p.m. at the Radisson Plaza Hotel, 150 Broadway South, Rochester, MN 55904. Early bird program fees (register by 4/12/02) are \$275 for RAQC members and \$299 for non-members; regular fees are \$299 for RAQC members and \$349 for non-members.

For reservations or more information, please call 507-285-7560 or email [kay.wiegert@roch.edu](mailto:kay.wiegert@roch.edu)

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#### 4. The Give & Take of Corporate Citizenship -- May 2

It might be a bit of a paradox given the difficult state of our economy, but corporate citizenship (in terms of both giving as well as volunteerism) is perhaps more important now than ever. Communities, educational institutions, charitable organizations, and other civic and religious groups are all in need of support.

But – with so many worthy causes and the current financial constraints facing companies – today’s challenge is to find focus in an organization’s corporate citizenship efforts. Corporate contributions need to reflect rational and deliberate decisions based on defined criteria that reflect your company’s mission, strategy, interests, and values.

The Performance Improvement Network (PIN), a partner of the MN Council for Quality, is pleased to welcome Ms. Doris Rubenstein, Principal of PDP Services to their May 2 discussion. Ms. Rubenstein, with over 25 years of philanthropy experience, will share her insight on how corporate giving not only helps the organizations for which they are intended, but also benefits the giving organization in terms of advancing its strategy; improving the communities in which they do business; improving employee satisfaction, morale, and loyalty; generating publicity and goodwill; and, of course, reducing tax liabilities. Come learn how to create well-defined giving policies, processes, and procedures that eliminate ambiguity and turn "corporate giving" into "social investing."

For more information or to register, please visit [www.improvementnetwork.org](http://www.improvementnetwork.org) or call 612-269-8242.

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#### 5. How Quality Plays on Wall Street

Congratulations to Craig Robinson, president of Robinson Capital Management and chairman of the Minnesota Council for Quality, for the cover story article in this month's Quality Progress magazine. Written by Stephen George (a Minnesota-based author and consultant, and also a long-time supporter and stakeholder of the Minnesota Council for Quality), the article profiles the "Q-100 Index."

The Q-100, representing a subset of the S&P 500, reflects the top 100 organizations that demonstrate quality improvement and management strength. Based on a proprietary formula grounded in the Baldrige Criteria, the Index is weighted and diversified to align with the weighting and sectors in the S&P.

So how does it do? Between 9/30/98 and 12/31/01, the Q-100 returned 26.97% while the S&P 500 returned 17.59%. Furthermore, the Q-100 outperformed the S&P 500 in six out of the seven positive quarters and it did better half the time during down quarters.

The article appears on page 32 of the April 2002 edition. For more information, visit ASQ's website ([www.asq.org](http://www.asq.org)) or contact Craig Robinson at [craig\\_rcm@hotmail.com](mailto:craig_rcm@hotmail.com).